

Emotional Branding: Obama's Bottom-Up Campaign

In 2008 most American's desired change out of their current conditions in America. A drawn out war, recession ridden nation ready for change, is what Obama played upon and effectively convinced the nation that he would bring. His dialogue between himself and the nation was clear and simple, I am the people's brand and I am the new brand this nation needs to invest in. Americans enjoy brands that allow us to be who we are and perhaps allow us to be involved with something larger than ourselves. Obama's messages of hope, change and community were projected through everything he did and America bought into just that.

Barack Hussein Obama was elected the 44th president of the United States, because he embraced branding and delivered a united message across all forms of his campaign communication. The individuals who contributed to his campaign's communication included powerful individuals who understood his brand and exuded it in every arena of campaign communication. The campaign structure ran bottom-up, allowing for a powerful grassroots force that knew the brand as well as the campaign staffers. The campaign also catered to Samuel L. Popkin's theories on the way in which voters receive and process information through *low-information rationality* and *by product theory*. Using this and core principles of brand platform development and positioning, they created a clear foundation for which all lines of communication stood on, and dispersed it to the public using appeals of emotion.

Emotional branding is a concept that was developed by Marc Gobé. As the President and CEO of one of the world's top ten brand image firms, d/g* Worldwide, he has worked with clients such as Coca-Cola, Versace and Starbucks. With over twenty-five years of experience in the formation of brands, he has mastered brand construction using the vision of his clients and

the emotions of their clients. While brands are introduced everyday, those that engage the customer emotionally can reap major benefits.

Using Gobé's key concepts of relationship, sensorial experiences, imagination, and vision, I will examine how Brand Obama played on the emotions of the American voter's to his brand's success. By adjusting his campaign messaging to different generations and demographics meanwhile still maintaining his platform of change, he built a relationship with America in its entirety. The first to ever use a logo throughout a presidency, the design and what it stood for communicated volumes without the use of words. This and an Emmy award winning viral video emotionally captivated the senses through branding. An imagination for the brand's iconography translated into Shepard Fairey, a well known graffiti artist, in creating an iconic image that drove the campaign and was seen everywhere. However, it was Obama's online operation that made historic success, encapsulated the vision of the brand and the future he had planned if elected.

The Obama campaign team used a brand platform based on change to channel emotionally appealing messages out to the public, communicating that the brand of the people would result in a presidency of the people.

Campaign Team

"Because I was not favored, that meant that the people who signed up for this campaign really believed in what the campaign was about. So they weren't mercenaries. They weren't coming in to just attach to a campaign" (Tumulty). Obama used cohesive communication and his brand to connect not only his team, but his many supporters across the country as well. Each brand has brand ambassadors who are individuals that exemplify and represent the brand's image. Obama had an extensive team of paid and unpaid grassroots brand ambassadors who

carried his message door to door, across the nation and all throughout cyberspace. These people all believed in brand Obama because he made an effort to cater to YOU, you being each individual in this country.

Leading the campaign, AKPD Message and Media political consulting firm worked to create sound messaging for Obama's campaign. AKPD was built by David Axelrod, the campaign's Chief Strategist. David Plouffe, took on the role of Campaign Manager and has also become an AKPD Senior Advisor. These two leaders worked to create a diverse team of communications professionals as well as experienced community organizers to lead the mass of volunteers comprising Obama's support system.

Plouffe was responsible for planning where and when to spend money and created a masterful tactic for spending. "The mastermind of Obama's long-range campaign plan that looked beyond the Feb. 5 Super Tuesday primaries that Clinton had predicted would deliver the nomination to her. He dispatched staff to states that Clinton's campaign overlooked, particularly small caucus states where intensive organization produced wins that swelled Obama's delegate lead" (Pickler). He made sure salaries were modest and in all areas staffers were paid much less than Hillary's. However, the savings paid off and resulted in the campaign's strong endurance when it came to spending.

Steve Hildebrand, Barack's Deputy Campaign manager, oversaw field organization and ran the bottom-up grassroots campaign efforts. While most campaigns are run top-down, Brand Obama combined different structures of campaign organization to allow for grassroots efforts to drive the campaign. "One of the main differences between the Obama campaign and its predecessors was that it fused the mass-organization and peer-to-peer models. It directed activities from the center, but also encouraged peer-to-peer collaboration" (Fowler, Appendix A).

Not only was the campaign structure shifted to accommodate non-traditional lines of communication, but it also allowed for volunteers to do jobs that ordinarily would be taken on by paid staffers.

Staffers usually organize and train volunteers to spread the candidate's message but the Obama campaign gave volunteer's the responsibility of canvassing for themselves by providing tools online to aid in proper communication. Staffers provided more of a support role as they trained grassroots organizers in groups and then made themselves available for guidance. While grassroots fueled the machine, an efficient New Media Team drove advertising.

Joe Rospars headed the New Media Team for the campaign and reported directly to David Plouffe. He had control over the design of BarackObama.com and also led an "analytics team". This subgroup tracked all activity on the site, including ad traffic as well as which emails were being viewed the most. "If the site was the car, the analytics team served as its mechanic, tuning and tweaking as needed in a 24-hour online cycle. Usually, campaigns hire outside vendors to do all this work. Not Obama, whose campaign mirrored a Silicon Valley start-up" (Vargas). Not only did Rospar's team have 30 members on board, surpassing the other candidates online teams, but they had a full time chief technology officer. Kevin Malover, one time head of the online travel agency Orbitz, took the position. Most of his work involved compiling data about demographics of voters and in turn understanding future brand consumers.

Popkin: Low-information Rationality and by-product theory

The majority of citizens in: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin, Washington state and the District of Columbia. McCain

claimed Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming, all bought into brand Obama. According to the New York Times exit polls, 95% of African Americans, 66% of Americans under thirty, and 69% of first time voters all wanted Obama in office. More people voted in this U.S. Presidential election than ever before but why?

Samuel L. Popkin, a professor of Political Science, discusses the communication and persuasion employed during political campaigns in his book, *The Reasoning Voter*. His theory of how voters think relies mainly on the term *low-information rationality*. “The term *low-information rationality*—popularly known as ‘gut’ reasoning—best describes the kind of practical thinking about government and politics in which people actually engage” (Popkin, 7). Citizens are bombarded with information from campaigns, the media and interpersonal communication during elections and often cues or shortcuts are used to arrive on the decision of who to vote for. Citizens often have trouble deciding which information should take precedence, and often fall back on emotions to facilitate their decision. “One reason that people do not behave like naïve statisticians is that data presented in an emotionally compelling way may be given greater consideration and more weight than data that is statistically more valid, but emotionally neutral” (Popkin, 16). This, in addition to lack of time most citizens dedicate to obtaining information, explains how many people process candidate information during elections.

Popkin’s *by-product* theory of information explains how most voters acquire candidate information as a by-product of their routine lives. Knowledge is obtained based on each citizen’s main concerns, however most citizens know general knowledge about the condition of the country through everyday life. During the election, one of the main and most known about

issues was the economy. The Republican led Bush administration economy was failing at the time of the 2008 election, and many citizens desired something different. Daily *by-product* messages of a failing economy allowed for Obama's call for "change" to be welcomed and wanted by many American's distraught with current conditions. Brand Obama relied on information "shortcuts" to engage potential supporters through emails, social networking, and open communication catering to individual's interests and familiarities. Popkin also emphasizes voters weighing of candidate's competence levels as a major deciding factor when voting.

While Obama was known for his lack of experience compared to other candidates, a large percentage of voter's often do not take the time to research this fact and fall back on what the media and campaign exhibit. "They assess the candidate's competence on the basis of data that is new and easy to process, particularly information from the party conventions and the political campaign" (Popkin, 62). Brand Obama exhibited competence through emphasis of being the new change that was needed at every encounter, making it easy for the everyday citizen to decipher and act upon this main idea. The brand also connected easily with citizens because it was run and supported by citizens, directly appealing to local networks during the election. "When a candidate is in some sense a neighbor, the voter at least has a better chance of knowing whether he or she is a blatant crook or an obvious fool" (Popkin, 64). The grassroots campaign structure demonstrated Obama's ability to reach local communities and base his campaign on the people.

Brand Platform/Positioning

On a basic level, branding is the communicational dialogue between a consumer and a brand. What a brand projects as its image and what a consumer understands may not be the same, which is why not all brands are successful. This is why President Obama's branding

communication has been noticed by business publications such as *Fast Company*, who named team Obama number 1 on their “Fast Company 50”, tagging it, “the year’s most successful startup” (McGirt). While Obama’s objective was ultimately to win an election and become president, his strides towards that goal were unique and fundamentally based on human emotion. Communication is defined as, a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through common systems of symbols, signs, or behavior as well as, a technique for expressing ideas effectively. Communication, therefore, acts as the base for which a brand stands. This then makes the selling of a candidate extremely similar to the selling of any other brand we choose to consume.

Today there is a great deal of literature on how to construct an effective brand. Many scholars use the same basic tools with slightly different strategies or lingo. For my purposes I will use a variety of resources to outline brand structure. First, a brand must be built on core values that the organization breathes from the inside out. The *brand platform*, as it is often called, is made up of three components.

Overall, the brand platform is designed to:

- Impart a common understanding of the brand throughout an organization;
- Influence behaviours that shape stakeholder perceptions over time;
- Serve as the creative brief for visual and verbal identity development, as well as communications in the round. (Clifton, 86)

For Brand Obama, not necessarily a company, but a candidate, the brand platform would be based on his core messages, hope and change.

While Brand Obama does have a team behind it, for branding purposes, his brand platform would be based upon where he stands on issues, or in other words, what he stands for as a candidate and how he communicates that message. On Obama’s campaign website, he summarizes his platform with the following:

To build a lasting foundation for America's economic prosperity and security, we'll organize around the core challenges facing Americans and their families—energy, health care, and education. By acting together, we can overcome the obstacles that for too long have prevented real change on the critical issues that Americans face day in and day out. Now is the time to leave behind the status quo and build support for real solutions to ensure that President Obama succeeds in fulfilling the promise of change
(BarackObama.com)

These were Obama's driving issues throughout the campaign and at all avenues he communicated them together with the words "change," "hope" and terms of unity. By keeping his messaging clear, concise and focused, his brand platform stood strong through his rhetoric and that of his entire brand. This platform was communicated from the bottom-up, allowing all grassroots supporters to know and understand Obama's vision.

Once you know what your brand stands for, it is important to correctly place your core message in the minds of your audience. "Although complex and multi-layered brand positioning models and frameworks can be useful, brand positioning must always be capable of being explained and expressed in a couple of words, a sharp sentence, or a clear image- not a slogan or an advertising end line or tag line, but the core idea of the brand" (Clifton, 80). For Obama, this core idea would most definitely be change. His physical appearance, call for action of the status quo in America and entire brand all stand on this principle alone.

In order to position effectively, a typical brand positioning process includes:

- The need to understand your stakeholders in the broadest sense, both internally and externally
- The generation of information, insights, ideas and possibilities
- An active definition of your "position" or your brand platform, and the expression of that position through visual and verbal identity, products, services and behaviours
- The disciplined application of a brand architecture system to optimize the value of the positioning
- The continuous development, management and evaluation of the positioning over time (Clifton, 81)

Brand Obama's positioning relied mostly on the fact that change was what was needed at the time of the election. "Polls indicated that more than 80 percent of likely voters felt that the country was on the wrong track or moving in the wrong direction" (The Living Room Candidate). Eight years of Bush presidency had ended with an economic crisis, rising gas prices and unemployment rates reaching new highs. Brand Obama knew change would be the theme for all communication from the beginning and while he may have lacked in experience compared to the other candidates, his emotional branding system would be his key to success.

Scott Bedbury, the advertising executive credited with Nike's "Just do it" campaign, once explained, "A great brand taps into emotions. Emotions drive most, if not all, of our decisions. A brand reaches out with a powerful connecting experience. It's an emotional connecting point that transcends the product" (Minden, 2). Using emotional branding appeals, I will map out how Obama executed on the four pillars of emotional branding, a type of branding focused on engaging customers through communication centered around emotions. Marc Gobé, a seasoned brand designer, presents this structure in his book titled, *Emotional Branding: The new paradigm for connecting brands to people*. The paradigm rests on four areas: relationship, sensorial experiences, imagination/innovation, and vision.

Emotional Branding- Relationship

In order to sell a brand, you first need to understand your customer in order to best communicate that whatever you are selling is the best option for them. Brand Obama knew that America included three key generations of consumers as well as a diverse population of possible voters. These consumers all react emotionally to different cues and are best sold under certain messages catering to their generational and societal experience.

Baby boomers, the generation born between 1946 and 1964, respond to cues of comfort. This generation lived through the Vietnam War, the hippie era and racial segregation. “Well into the first quarter of the new millennium, Boomers will comprise a dynamic and challenging demographic, and the brands that can provide an identity as versatile as the Boomers themselves stand to reap great success” (Gobé, 4). To start, Obama belongs to the Boomers and catered to their wants by understanding their culture first-hand. These Boomers are not necessarily experienced with technology and appreciate more traditional marketing. “Emotional Branding is about comfort, reassurance, and solutions for this group” (Gobé, 8). Beginning in 2007, Obama’s campaign communication included these three components by first fostering a presence in “swing” and “battleground” states early.

To the Boomers, Obama could not win by simply being new, but instead he needed to reassure and communicate what he could bring as president firsthand by talking to people through his brand representatives called campaign staffers. With the bottom-up structure of the campaign, the diverse set of paid staffers and organizers were trained to communicate Obama’s selling points on the ground level, providing mass face to face, personalized messaging for free. His appearances with small amount donors also aided in this face time. “Normally, it is only the big donors who get quality time with a candidate. But Obama devoted far more of his schedule to small-dollar events. In Kentucky, the month after he announced his run for President, the first such effort quickly sold out all 3,200 tickets at \$25 a head—and produced the beginning of a local organization” (Tumulty). While the boomers are convinced through more conventional methods, Gen-X requires more nontraditional persuading.

Born between 1965 and 1976, Gen-eXcels as they are sometimes referred to, are a smaller generation than the Boomers and respond well when their individuality is played upon.

“They have abandoned the typical hierarchical mentality in favor of equality—in other words, they expect others, even their bosses, to treat them as equals” (Gobé, 14). Once again, Obama’s customer or voter built brand caters to the needs of another generation because its base includes these individuals ability to make it their election through Obama’s team-centered efforts. Obama’s adaptive leadership style, an approach now being taught at Harvard, especially appeals to this demographic.

In a *Fast Company* article, Stephen Bouwhuis of *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, explains this leadership style aids to, “A shift...in ways of thinking across a community. While a visionary puts forth a specific plan to be implemented, an adaptive leader works with constituents to devise one together” (McGirt). Obama’s grassroots campaign, web inclusive networking and call for change as a whole country not divided by parties all exemplify this. Obama made a point to ask for the input of not only his staff, but the citizens, who he claimed to need if he was to be elected to lead the country. EXcels also especially appreciate humor in advertising, another emotional appeal that Brand Obama employed.

A web advertisement titled, “Al the Shoe Salesman Gets a Taxcut” features Ed O’Neill, star of the late 80’s, early 90’s sitcom *Married with Children*. The ad features “Al,” referring to the main character Al Bundy, using the Obama online taxcut calculator featured on the Obama website. He inputs his 20,000 dollar a year salary and discovers that through Obama’s plan he will save 1,000 dollars while with McCain’s he will save nothing. The advertisement is sarcastic in nature and applies particularly to this generation since many of the eXcels are familiar with this particular character. While eXcels appreciate individuality, the millenials appreciate community.

Generation Y, made up of millennials born between 1977 and 1994, are not known for showing up to the polls. Born into the information age, web familiar and brand aware, this generation is often the toughest to convince. While eXcels value their individuality, Gen Y tends to sympathize with the group, which translates nationally and globally. “Gen Y demonstrates an unprecedented sensitivity to global issues, such as poverty, war, environmentalism, as well as race gender, or sexual orientation discrimination issues” (Gobé, 23). Obama’s willingness to engage the nation and drive to engage the world defines this generation ideals. A brand has to stand for something in order to draw out this crowd.

Millenials, a nickname commonly used in reference to this generation being born into the new millennium, respond to new ideas, companies with a philosophy and interesting people (Gobé). Brand Obama embodied this, but it was important that he communicated that properly to this generation in order to make them act. Internet presence and efficiency was mandatory, but no other candidate formed a social networking front like Obama’s. “For Gen Y, it is a means of staying connected that provides a feeling of empowerment—it is this feeling of empowerment that has proved one of the greatest draws” (Gobé, 25). Obama made it easy for this generation to rally online and continue to rally on the ground-level without having to wait around for someone to tell them what to do. Understanding generations is just the beginning, considering our nation contains racial and sexual sub-cultures that are often left untapped.

Brand Obama’s diverse composition of employees or staffers, as well as Obama himself, communicate diversity. Being half African American, half Caucasian, the American people obviously are going to have a diverse range of opinions on this fact alone. Although, this does not dispute the fact that on a brand level, Obama made a point to connect with all races, all

genders, and all societal statuses with his core message of change. This message of change especially resounded in the minds of African-Americans.

On an emotional level, the hope to vote the first black President into office no doubt played an important role, he communicated appropriately to this group in other ways. “Nearly 70 percent of African-Americans feel the need to sustain ethnic traditions and symbols, as opposed to 46 percent of all other Americans” (Gobé, 30). Obama catered emotionally appealing rhetoric to this fact most apparently in his “A More Perfect Union” speech given on March 18, 2008 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He connects his wife’s genetic makeup to the struggles of Black Americans. “I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slaveowners—an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters” (CNN.com). Connecting his history to that of the entire American black community emotionally sticks in this culture. While Obama points out his genetic makeup to connect to this key group, his message always goes back to the unification of all races, while still using specifics in order to be accepted by other racial cultures.

“One of the dangers of marketing schemas and demographic sketches is that they often reduce complex, multifaceted audiences to stereotypical simplifications that lack the original groups’ rich diversity” (Gobé, 35). Obama’s understanding of the diverse America and his honesty about his own feelings about his blended race communicated understanding to all colors of people in America. He recalls comments about his “blackness,” “racial polarization” claims in the press and other issues involving race openly in his “A More Perfect Union” address, yet continues to dismiss these issues in exchange for the unification of an America together as one with different cultures residing inside. Women are also a large voter group residing in America and their consumer taste connects especially well with emotional branding.

Relationships in branding are key for women and to build this brand connection with female consumers, Gobé emphasizes five essentials, respect, individuality, stress relief, connection, and relationship. As a man, Obama can only sympathize to an extent with his female audience, however, he used two very strong brand representatives to attest to his intentions for progress with women's issues. Michelle Obama, Barack's wife and Jill Biden, Joe Biden's wife, traveled across the country to speak during the campaign in order to allow women a chance to understand how Obama's presidency would help women.

They sat down in front of ABC's morning show, *Good Morning America*, to refute Cindy McCain's dismissal of abortion issues being important in this campaign during an interview. Michelle pointed out the importance of a keeping a women's right to choose and further talked about other struggles women encounter these days. This interview, along with the women's campaign tour, allowed for women to connect emotionally with Brand Obama as they illustrated understanding first-hand what women are up against and how an Obama presidency would understand their concerns. Most women are able to connect with them on some level and this aided in providing women the satisfaction of feeling like respected individuals and consumers of Brand Obama. Oprah's endorsement of Obama may have also been an important emotional branding factor for women across the country as well.

While Hillary Clinton, a woman, was a main candidate for the presidency in the primaries, Oprah had for the first time decided to publicly stand behind a presidential candidate. Millions of women watch this influential television personality and often are informed through the stories that she covers. Elizabeth MacDonald, a *Forbes* magazine senior editor comments, "She's got not just a TV show where she reaches over 40 million viewers a week, she has a Web site, she's got magazines, and she's been at it for years so she's built quite, not just a fan base but

a following, and that's key. It's not just that she has views, people act on what she says" (Greenfield). Her support included fundraisers, campaign appearances and coverage on her show. The Oprah brand means a lot to American women and her enthusiasm for Brand Obama acted as a familiar emotional endorsement for many of this group.

For the gay and lesbian population, branding needs to acknowledge and respect them whole-heartedly. Since this demographic is so diverse and not always welcomed, brands who do take this groups needs into consideration are successful. While apparent that this was not one of Brand Obama's key demographics to convince, he did not ignore them. Obama stood against the constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, vocalized plans to provide benefits for civil unions and called Clinton's "don't ask, don't tell" policy "counterproductive" (Associated Press). These publicized facts, along with Mrs. Obama's speech at a Democratic National Committee Gay and Lesbian Leadership Council fundraiser, expressed a genuine honesty from the brand. "We are all only here because of those who marched and bled and died, from Selma to Stonewall, in the pursuit of a more perfect union" (Associated Press). Her reference to riots between homosexuals at a gay bar and police in New York back in 1969 reflect the brands understanding of how far this group has come, translating to a brand that understands what this group has been through and where its need for growth in America.

Emotional Branding- Sensorial Experiences

"Given the competition among today's corporations, it is my feeling that no business can afford to neglect the five senses. Carefully crafted sensory appeals can create that consumer preference that distinguishes a brand amidst a sea of competing commodities" (Gobé, 69). For a presidential brand, obviously you cannot tap all of these senses, however Obama did have some aid when it came to musically connecting his voters.

One musically influenced message that set Obama apart from the other candidates was the viral video constructed by Will.i.am, a member of the popular pop group Black Eyed Peas. This web video included split screen shots with one side showing different famous musicians and actors collaborating vocally while footage of Obama's speech from the New Hampshire primary are shown coinciding. The moving melody, chanting of "Yes we can," "Change," and "Vote" come off as an authentic call to action for anyone in tune with popular culture. "Cut from the speech's original 13 minutes to a concise and uplifting four and a half, the video achieves things politicians can usually only dream about, but which pop takes for granted: it puts emotion at the centre of the message, it never bores, and it is effortlessly cool" (McCormick). This new, unconventional, uncontrived and free promotion succeeds in pulling at the heart strings through music while soundly promoting the Obama brand.

With millions of views on YouTube, MySpace, Divedive and other video sharing sites, it went on to win an Emmy in the first ever "New Approaches in Daytime Entertainment" for 2008 as well as a Webby, the equivalent of an Oscar for the internet, for the "Artist of the Year." This iconic juxtaposition of rhetoric and music exemplifies the customer's ability to transform a brand's image and in turn bypass the brand's control while still clearly understanding his core messages of "change," "hope," and "unity." However, the sense Obama really took advantage of was sight.

Sol Sender, of the design agency Sender LLC, led a team in creating the red, white and blue logo for Obama's campaign. Design efforts began in 2006 and the official logo was introduced in Illinois on February of 2007 when he introduced his candidacy. This team wanted to do something different while still remaining uncontroversial. Red, white, and blue are always used for campaigns because they are the colors of the American flag and represent patriotism to

most if not all Americans. Immediately, people feel connected under this color scheme because it's familiar yet the difference is in the versatility of Obama's logo.

Never before has a presidential contender developed a logo and Brand Obama's stamp became known for that very fact. Sender explains in an interview, "Everything was primarily typographic, there were no real logos to speak of. For Senator Obama, I think the idea of something different, obviously of change, that all worked very nicely with the identity of the campaign and the graphic language that was developed" (VSA Partners, Inc.). Developing this logo meant it could be presented alone or along with other text and still would represent Obama. The "O" representing his name, the sun shining above the horizon, and the dynamic nature of the image encapsulate emotionally stimulating effects for the consumer to feast on. These elements equal new, change and hope for a new beginning.

Emotional Branding- Imagination

The key to emotional branding largely lies on creativity. Consumers respond to brands that think with an edge and with the user in mind. "Creativity...demands an ongoing commitment to building an open-ended, relationship-oriented culture that encourages emotional sensitivity/understanding and the questioning of status quo, which, in turn, will inevitably lead to the most thrilling expressions of creativity" (Gobé, 106). Obama capitalized on this principle by introducing one uniform icon to represent the brand and simultaneously sparked a surge of creativity in his supporters.

Shepard Fairey is a graffiti artist, graphic designer and owner of the well-known clothing company *Obey*. He is also responsible for the shadowy, iconic images of Obama produced during the campaign. Fairey is known for producing controversial political images that often

question our society. So what made Fairey's image impactful? This campaign image was considered art, it was everywhere and Brand Obama had no participation in the creation of it.

"A photograph is turned into a high-contrast image, eliminating the intervening middle tones until all that remain are strong areas of white and black. (Fairey used red, white, and blue to tint the middle tones, giving the sense that Obama is basking in reflected patriotic colors)" (Lewis). By adjusting contrasts, colors and tones, Fairey came up with an image that screamed all the ideals Brand Obama stands for (Appendix C). The image generated publicity, shifted the face of politics to images resembling classic images of propaganda and called for action through an image without words necessary.

Typography choice also contributed to Brand Obama's clear and consistent messages throughout his campaign. A font called Gotham was used not only on all of the official campaign materials but also on the website, which I will discuss later. The campaign's ability to maintain continuity in fonts across the board impressed many designers, including Michael Bierut, an expert and critic in graphic design.

The thing that sort of flabbergasts me as a professional graphic designer is that, somewhere along the way they decided that all their graphics would basically be done in the same typeface, which is this typeface called Gotham. If you look at one of his rallies, every single non-handmade sign is in that font. Every single one of them (Romano).

While some may find this boring, the Gotham type immediately connected voters to Brand Obama. With so many campaign messages calling for voter's attention, this thoughtful uniformity helped to define and differentiate Obama.

The creativity put into Obama's logo reflected Obama's vision while also giving his supporters room to make it their own. "Emotionally driven corporate-identity programs need to be visionary, integrated, visceral, and reflective of a true commitment from corporations to share their values with the consumers" (Gobé, 154). The logo was adapted through communication in

order to appeal to different demographics in the United States. Small additions to the original logo were made in order to connect with groups such as students, the gay and lesbian population, women and other minorities (Appendix D). The student's logo was adapted to include binder paper in the center of the logo, while the women's adaptation included a female sex symbol. These small touches spoke largely on all sorts of campaign materials supporting Brand Obama.

Emotional Branding- Vision

Obama's online operation, named the "Triple O", made history in the 2008 election through online networking, fundraising, and emailing efforts. The open lines of communication online were unlike those ever before seen and tapped into the emotions of web 2.0. "Brand communities can be fostered around the fact that buyers can communicate with each other, learn from each other, and help each other" (Gobé, 243). The brand's bottom-up philosophy cultivated this through MyBarackObama.com, otherwise known as MyBO. "On Obama's own socnet, 2 million profiles were created. In addition, 200,000 offline events were planned, about 400,000 blog posts were written and more than 35,000 volunteer groups were created—at least 1,000 of them on Feb. 10, 2007, the day Obama announced his candidacy" (Vargas). From the numbers alone, it is easy to see people were excited about Obama and wanted to communicate that online nationally.

Chris Hughes, Obama's Coordinator for online organizing and co-founder of Facebook, is responsible for the look and feel of the two Obama sites, BarackObama.com and MyBarackObama.com.

BarackObama.com features constant updates, videos, photos, ringtones, widgets, and events to give supporters a reason to come back to the site. On mybarckobama.com, the campaigns quasi-social network, Obamaniacs can create their own blogs around platform issues, send policy recommendations directly to the campaign, set up their own mini fund-raising site, organize an event, even use a phone-bank widget to get call lists and scripts to tele-canvass from home (McGirt).

This mass amount of online user-familiar options made it easy for Obamaniacs to carry enthusiasm on to those in their community and thus created a mass salary-free staff working online and on the streets.

Never before had a candidate commanded this sort of presence online. Putting the brand in the hands of voters virtually allowed for followers to feel like they had the power to personalize this election and organize without having to go through the hierarchy of most top-down run campaigns. While social networking kept supporters in contact, email communication allowed Obama to communicate directly to supporters, creating a personal relationship with not only himself and his advocates, but his Brand as a whole. “Obama’s e-mail list contains upwards of 13 million addresses. Over the course of the campaign, aides sent more than 7,000 different messages, many of them targeted to specific donation levels. In total, more than 1 billion e-mails landed in inboxes” (Vargas). This may sound somewhat impersonal, but the conversational tone and personal touches in format communicated authenticity. Always ending his emails with his first name, you-centered messages and constant updates allowed for each voter to feel involved (Appendix B).

Conclusion

Brand Obama effectively employed voter friendly messages from the ground up, by understanding the citizens and using creative appeals of emotion to appeal as the candidate of choice. Without the help of a largely grassroots organization, dedicated staff and unyielding message consistency, the brand would not have met the success it was destined for. The ability for information to come through accessibly online and in the daily lives of most citizens adhered to Popkin’s ideas of communication and persuasion essential for political campaigns to be successful.

The brand's platform and positioning were enacted through strong lines of emotional messaging, calling on Gobe's paradigm of branding essentials. An understanding of voter ages and demographics, centering messages around different human senses, new logo developments, and the power of the internet spoke to the emotions of Americans and resulted in a successful brand as well as a winning campaign. Brand Obama represented change from the beginning, but the election of the first African American President of the United States proved the brand to be true to its word.

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Appendix A: Martin Fowler's Organizational Dynamics of Campaigns diagram

A command-and-control organization has the campaign leadership directing campaign staffers who direct volunteers.

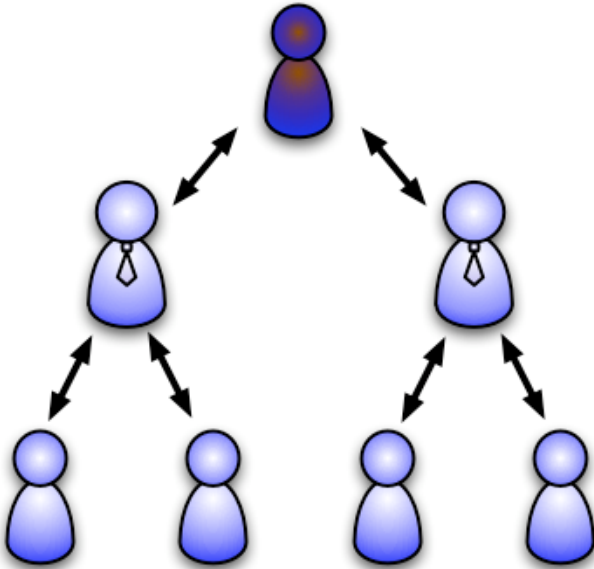


Figure 2: A peer to peer organization has volunteers communicating directly with each other

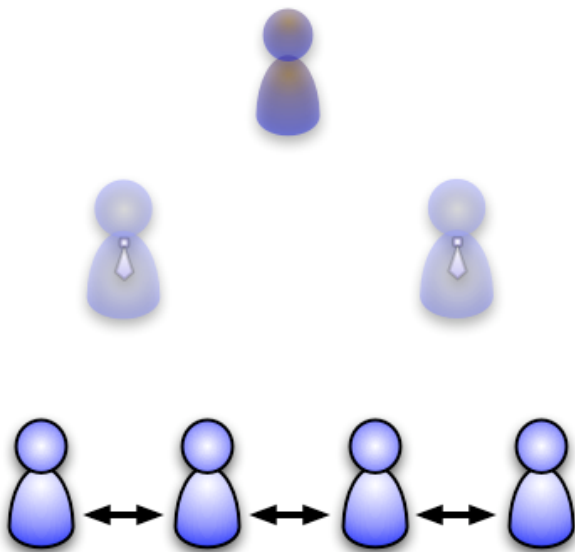


Figure 3: Mass organization has the campaign leadership direct the volunteers directly

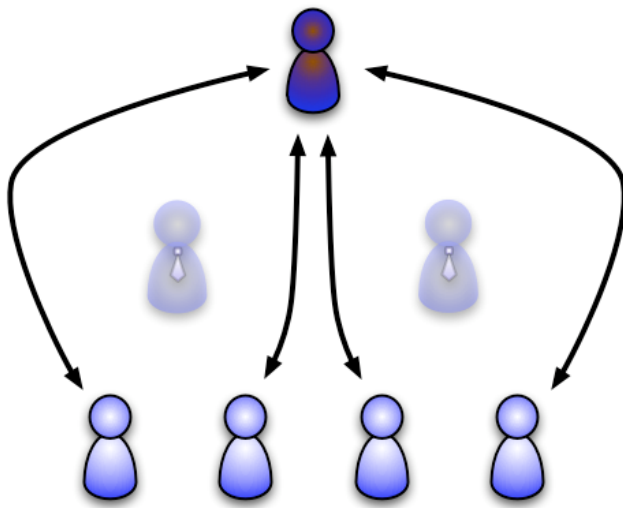
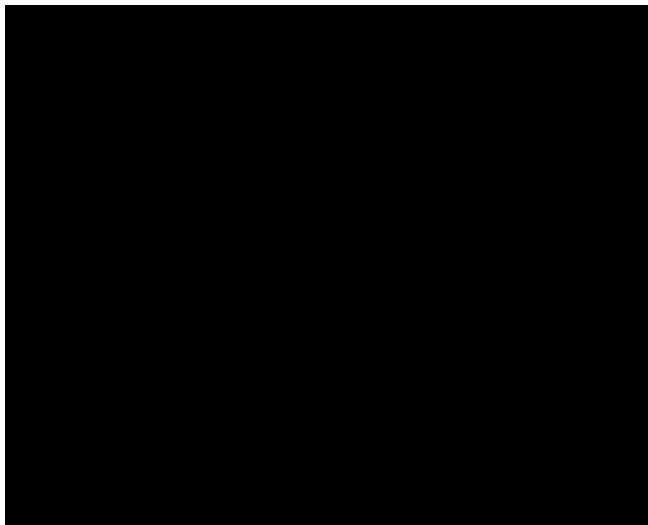


Figure 4: Fusing the mass organization and peer-to-peer models



Appendix B: Email example

From: Barack Obama <info@barackobama.com>
Subject: **A big win**
Date: January 26, 2008 6:20:16 PM PST
To: Tim Bonnemann
Reply-To: info@barackobama.com

Barack Obama
Not In Address Book

Tim --

We've just won a big victory in South Carolina.

After four great contests in every corner of this country, and another record turnout today, we have the most votes, the most delegates, and the most diverse coalition of Americans we've seen in a long, long time.

You'll have a chance to make your voice heard next Tuesday, February 5th -- and I am counting on you.

I'll be heading down shortly to thank our supporters in South Carolina.

If you're reading this tonight, I hope you'll tune in at home so I can thank you, too.

Barack

DONATE

Paid for by Obama for America

This email was sent to: tim@plansphere.com

To unsubscribe, go to: <http://my.barackobama.com/unsubscribe>

Appendix C: Shepard Fairey image



Appendix D: Campaign logo variance

